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THE ENJOYMENT OF POETRY. By MAX EASTMAN. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Always we have more or less obscurely understood that the age-long quarrel between the poetic mind and the practical mind has been based upon an incompatibility of temperament rather than a conflict of beliefs. Temperamental quarrels, we know, are often precisely the bitterest; yet, unlike quarrels of conviction, they tend to disappear as their underlying cause becomes more clearly understood. Thus, true discernment, while it seems to erect barriers, often in reality dissolves them. No sooner has William James propounded his famous distinction between the "tough-minded" and the "tender-minded" than we perceive that no one belongs wholly to either class; and from that moment each is in a better position for mutual understanding.

As effectual in its way is the evidently sound distinction which Max Eastman has drawn in his book, *The Enjoyment of Poetry*, between the poetic and the practical. Like most sound distinctions, this turns out to be not a gulf, but a line of light and shade. Once we have glimpsed the shadowy demarcation—shadowy, but real—we see, as thinkers, what the artist sees in nature—that there are no absolute divisions. Then we may begin to enjoy literature and life more genuinely and to use them both to better purpose.

Fundamentally the distinction lies in this: that practical people habitually view things in relation to some ulterior purpose, and name them accordingly, while the poetic instinct aims at vivid realization and chooses the names that help realization most. Very simple the distinction seems, but in its simplicity its great utility resides. The difference between the poetic and the practical is not an imaginary cross-section, but a natural line of cleavage: it runs through literature and on into life. It separates one mood from another, one kind of conversation from another, one kind of book from another. In short, it is a vital distinction, and in accepting it we must accept what it implies—what adheres to it on each side—both the poetry and the prose.

And if we accept it we shall see, more clearly, perhaps, than ever before, that poetry is not merely prettiness "printed and bound in little books," but that it is essentially the desire for realization throbbing through life and through language. The same cause, we perceive, explains the creation of slang—which is often poetry in the rough—and the instinctive desire to taste experience to the full. Moreover, we cannot help seeing that if life without purpose is insignificant, life without at least some degree of realization would have, so to speak, no substance: so that a wholly unpoetic world would be a world of abstract relations merely. In practice there is room—there is need—for both worlds. In words that recall certain utterances of Professor Münsterberg, Mr. Eastman emphasizes the fact that "things are and continue to be what the poet names them, whatever else they may be, or be named, by the scientist." Elsewhere he enforces the wholesome truth that poetry and purposeful achievement are not incompatible. "We are all," he remarks, "except those lost in apathy, in some degree both poetic and practical. But the example of the hero proves that it is possible for a man, who can think clearly and command the differences that lie within him, to be both poetic and practical in a high degree."

The clear definition of poetry considered psychologically—that is, vitally—persuades more powerfully toward its enjoyment than any amount of critical eloquence; for it may be doubted if the rhetoric of appreciation ever really does more than confirm tastes already formed. Carrying on his method of analysis, Mr. Eastman shows that the poetic naming of things really enriches our experience of them. Children know this instinctively; in some degree we feel the truth of it every day of our lives. We might well be content with the simple correlation of poetic with ordinary experience; but if we seek further explanation, the process of poetic naming may be described as one of selection and comparison. The mind selects the point for most intense realization, and memory deepens the effect. Similarly, another familiar fact of experience—the fact that imaginative realization is often more intense than reality itself—affords a simple explanation of the spell of poetry—a spell not to be accounted unreal or illusory, since it is part of the very fabric of life. Incidentally, we find that the poetic figures are by no means indirect modes of expression, but that they contain the very essence of directness.

In detail the author discusses, from the psychological as opposed to the rhetorical standpoint, things, action, emotion, and thought as realized in poetry. In so doing he sweeps aside several “limiting definitions.” Emotion, for instance, is not, he maintains, “the essence nor a definitive feature of poetry. The most practical language—like earnest achievement—can awaken the emotions. It is not the existence of these emotions, but our attitude toward them that distinguishes the poetic mood. We wish to experience them for their own sake.”

Ingenious and plausible, though no indispensable part of the main thesis of the book, is Mr. Eastman’s explanation of the effect of rhythm in intensifying realization—an explanation which may strike some readers as leaning a little too heavily for support upon the not too obviously related phenomena of sleep and intoxication.

Mr. Eastman writes both imaginatively and logically. His quotations from a considerable variety of poets seem not merely to illustrate his thought, but to contain the germ of it. They justify the method of the book by the added value they derive from the context in which they are placed.

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THE DAFFODIL FIELDS. By JOHN MASEFIELD. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913.

To find oneself, at this date, reading a long narrative poem, dealing with modern people and situations, and to find oneself, moreover, enjoying every word of it, is an amazing experience. Still more surprising is it to realize that peculiarities which we would have condemned antecedently as soul-offending defects have not offended us in the least. Before the fact, who would have admitted that such a line as

“The Irishman removed his pipe and spoke”

would be tolerable, would be even conceivable, in, of all things, the Spenserian stanza? There are any number of such lines in *The Daffodil Fields*. There are, in fact, whole passages which might tempt derisory comparison with Crabbe’s famous description of the dredger who